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A LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED IN CHITTAGONG,
E. BENGAL, DURING 1944 AND 1945

BY

R. M. SIMMONS

(With a map)

Though this list is primarily one of birds observed in the immediate neighbourhood of Chittagong town some reference is made to observations elsewhere in East Bengal.

The list is necessarily very incomplete due to the period during which it was compiled being abnormal on account of the war and the fact that access to many areas was difficult for a civilian. Secondly only limited time could be devoted to the business of observation. In these circumstances the only territory where intensive observations could be carried out was confined to that immediately round the compiler's bungalow. Elsewhere it was only possible to make casual observations in the course of the day's work.

The period covered by these notes is from April 1944 till January 1945 and from April 1945 till the middle of August 1945.

Chittagong is situated a few miles inland from the sea at the head of the Bay of Bengal on the north bank of the tidal estuary of the river Karnaphuli. A low range of hills running parallel to the coast peters out in a series of hillocks in the middle of the town. Between these hills and the sea is a narrow coastal belt of low-lying

ground, partly paddy-fields and partly close cultivation round 'bastis' fairly thickly planted with trees, areca palms and clumps of bamboo. The hill ranges north of Chittagong are thickly forested, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the town where they have been cleared of the primary growth and are covered with coarse grass and scrub jungle; in the residential cantonment area they are well planted with various shade and flowering trees and are set with bungalows and the gardens surrounding them.

Unfortunately it was not possible to make any detailed study of such specialized biotopes as the forest or the sea shore. Elsewhere the area was chiefly remarkable for the absence of many of the more familiar species of peninsular India rather than for the presence of many unfamiliar ones. There was, however, evidence of a Burmese influence.

Lastly it must be mentioned that the list is compiled entirely from observations in the field and no bird was shot to establish its identity.

Corvus macrorhynchos. Jungle Crow.

Common resident. Nesting in December and January. Less numerous than the House Crow. A very large bird.

C. splendens. House Crow.

Particularly numerous near habitation.

Dendrociitta vagabunda. Tree-pie.

Resident and a common garden bird. Nesting in June and July. Newly fledged young seen in July and August.

Parus major. The Indian Grey Tit.

Only seen on 3 occasions; twice in April and once in June. On all 3 occasions a pair of birds was seen which suggests that they breed in the neighbourhood.

Turdoides somervillei. Jungle Babbler

Not seen by me, but reported twice (on 9-5-45 and 15-5-45) by reliable observers. Old residents of Chittagong told me that they were fairly common garden birds before the war.

Timalia pileata. Red-capped Babbler.

Appeared to be fairly common on hillsides covered with secondary growth.

Aegithina tiphia. Common Iora.

Resident. Common garden bird. No male was observed to have any black on the head during any season of the year.

Chloropsis aurifrons. Golden-fronted Chloropsis.

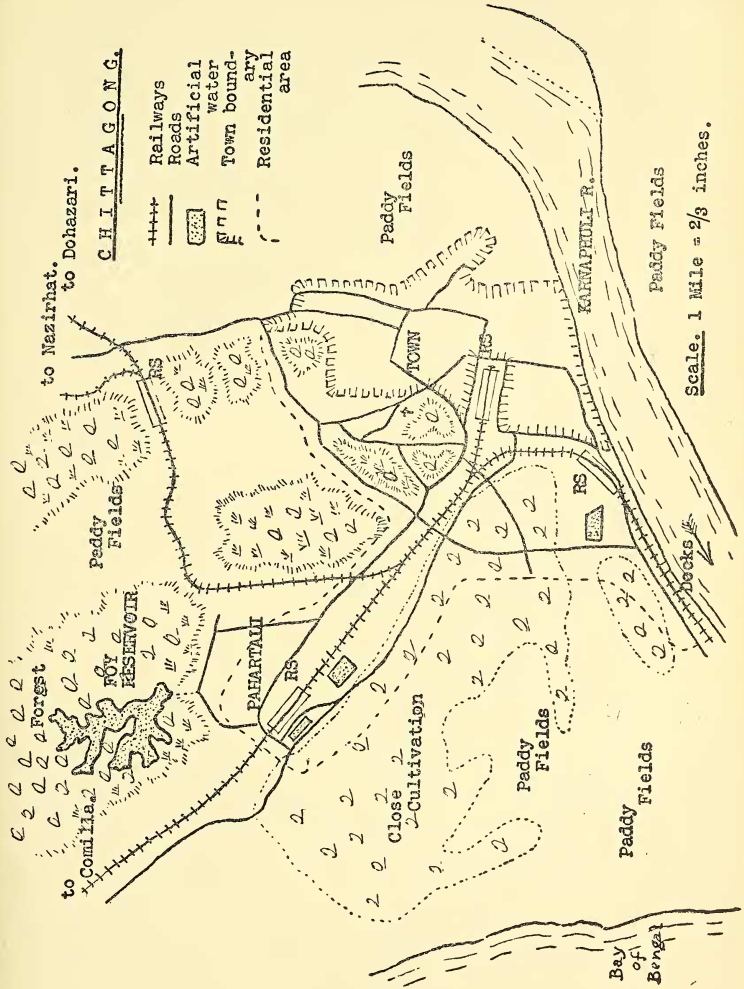
Fairly common in outskirts of forest and occasionally visiting gardens.

Molpastes cafer. Red-vented Bulbul.




The commonest bulbul. Nesting in April, May and June. Gathered into large flocks in October.

Otocompa jocosa Red-whiskered Bulbul.

Appeared to be a local migrant and was only observed about compounds from November to January. At other times was only seen in forest areas.



CHITTAGONG.

- ++++ Railways
- Roads
-  Artificial water
-  Town boundary
-  Residential area

Scale. 1 Mile = 2/3 inches.

O. flaviventris. Black-crested Yellow Bulbul.

Appeared to be a local migrant and was only seen about compounds in November and December.

Phoenicurus ochruros. Black Redstart.

Only seen once in late March 1944. The actual date was not recorded as I did not commence keeping systematic notes till April.

Copsychus saularis. Magpie-robin.

Resident and plentiful. Nests found in April and May. First newly fledged young seen on 9-5-45.

Monticola solitara. Blue Rock-thrush.

Winter visitor. Two distinct varieties were observed. The more common had no trace of chestnut on the under parts, the other had the lower breast and belly chestnut.¹ The habits of both were identical. First seen on 8-10-44 and last on 16-4-45. Only one hen was observed. The bird is very shy of being watched, even from a distance, though it will sit quite close if it thinks it is not observed.

Siphia parva (albicilla). Eastern Red-breasted Flycatcher.

Winter visitor. First seen 2-10-44 and last 19-4-45. The only flycatcher observed. They were fairly common but none of the red-breasted variety were seen.

Lanius cristatus. Brown Shrike.

Winter visitor. The common shrike of Chittagong. First seen on 23-9-44 and last on 11-5-45. No other shrike was seen in the immediate neighbourhood of Chittagong, but another (possibly *L. nasutus*.) was common in Tippera towards the end of the monsoon, but was only observed perching on telegraph wires from moving trains, so I am not sure of its identity.

Pericrocotus peregrinus. Small Minivet.

Though not observed during the period when I kept notes, I am sure I saw small parties once or twice in March 1944.

Artamus fuscus. Ashy Swallow-shrike.

Not seen in the immediate neighbourhood of Chittagong, but quite common near the railway line 10-30 miles north.

Dicurus macrocerus. King-crow.

Resident. One of the commonest birds. Newly fledged young seen in May, June and July.

D. longicaudatus. Grey Drongo.

Appeared to be a non-breeding visitor only observed in cold weather. First seen 24-12-44 and last 11-4-45.

Chibia hottentotta. Hair-crested Drongo.

Breeding. Newly fledged young seen on 8-6-45. After nesting it seemed to disappear and was not seen after 4-7-45 until I left Chittagong on 23-8-45.

Acrocephalus dumetorum. Blyth's Reed Warbler.

Winter visitor. Found in compound throughout the winter and last seen on 18-5-45. First heard singing on 19-4-45.

¹Blue-headed Rock-Thrush (*Monticola cinchorhyncha*)?—EDS.

Orthotomus sutorius. Tailor-bird.

Resident and common garden bird throughout the year.

Franklinia gracilis. Franklin's Wren-warbler.

Not very common and seemed to be absent, at least from residential area, during June and July.

Oriolus xanthornus. Black-headed Oriole.

The common oriole of E. Bengal.

Sturnia malabarica. Grey-headed Mynah.

Resident. Nesting in April and May. Gathering into large flocks at the end of June when they seemed to move to the more thickly forested areas.

Acridotheres tristis. Common Mynah.

Resident and ubiquitous in the neighbourhood of habitation. Newly fledged young seen on 26-5-45.

A. ginginianus. Bank Mynah.

Never seen except at Bahadurabad (Mymensingh District).

Æthiopsar fuscus. Jungle Mynah.

All had yellow eyes. Common but not so numerous as *A. tristis* with which it often associated. Generally seen in pairs. Young birds seen on 24-7-45.

Sturnopastor contra. Pied Mynah.

Probably the commonest of all the Mynahs in Chittagong. Nesting was in full swing by the middle of May.

Lamprocorax panayensis. Glossy Stare.

Not common. Seen in company of Grey-headed Mynahs, feeding on berries of an evergreen tree on 17-4-1945 and 10-5-1945.

Uroloncha punctulata. Spotted Munia.

The only munia seen by me. A pair started nesting in the porch of my bungalow on 9-10-1944 but later deserted; on 26-5-1945 it was noticed that a pair were renovating the nest and fledglings were first noticed at the nest on 20-7-1945. Other birds were seen nesting in July and August.

Passer domesticus. House Sparrow.

Common at the level of the coastal belt, but seldom seen on hilly ground. Most of the bungalows in the cantonment area are built on the tops of hillocks and it was quite unusual to see sparrows in gardens and compounds so situated.

Hirundo daurica. Red-rumped or Striated Swallow.

This was the only swallow seen in Chittagong and only observed in April 1945. Other swallows (probably *H. rustica*) were seen on the Brahmaputra river at Chandpur.

Motacilla alba. White Wagtail.

Common winter visitor. First seen 14-10-1944

M. cinerea. Grey Wagtail.

Winter visitor. A small party of these birds visited the static tank in my garden between 12 and 20 April 1945 and so enabled me to be certain of their identification.

Anthus rufulus. Indian Pipit.

Fairly common on open grass maidans in July and August.

A. hodgsoni. Indian Tree Pipit.

Seen on 4 occasions in compound; twice in October 1944 and twice in April 1945.

Mirafra assamica (?). The Bengal (?) Bush-lark.

Some form of bush-lark was common in more open country, but I cannot be sure of the identification.

Zosterops palpebrosa. White-eye.

A fairly common garden bird in every month of the year.

Cinnyris asiatica. Purple Sunbird.

Not very numerous though one or two birds visited the garden in every month of the year. Young birds seen in latter half of April.

Dicaeum erythrorhynchos. Tickell's Flowerpecker.

Flower peckers are difficult to identify as they are generally seen silhouetted against the sky as they feed on the berries of some parasite growth near the tops of high trees. This species however also fed on the berries of *Duranta* hedges and so was easily identified.

I believe I also identified *D. cruentatum*, but cannot be absolutely certain.

Dryobates (?). Pied Woodpecker.

I cannot readily distinguish between *D. maharattensis*, and *D. macei* in the field.¹ Common. Young bird with hen seen on 26-5-1945.

Brachypternus benghalensis. Golden-backed Woodpecker.

Common.

Megalaima lineatus. Lineated Barbet.

Common in well treed portions of cantonment area.

Megalaima haemacephala. Coppersmith.

Very common. Congregated into parties of a dozen or more in October and November.

Cuculus canorus. Asiatic Cuckoo.

Heard on several occasions during end of April and beginning of May 1945.

C. micropterus. Indian Cuckoo.

The common cuckoo of Chittagong and very noisy from January till June, often calling at night.

¹ Actually differentiation should not be difficult:

Male *mahrattensis* has forecrown brownish-yellow, hind crown orange-crimson; brown streaked yellowish-white breast and orange-crimson patch on abdomen.

Female entire crown brownish-yellow.

Male *macei* has entire crown crimson, back much blacker; chin, throat and upper breast unstreaked fulvous, long black moustachial streaks and no red abdominal patch.

Female entire crown black.—EDS.

Clamator jaeobinus. Pied Crested Cuckoo.

Scarce and not observed in the neighbourhood of Chittagong. First heard 22-5-45 near the railway line some 33 miles north of Chittagong.

Eudynamis scolopaceus. Koel.

Not as noisy as the Indian Cuckoo. Heard during the months April—July and September and October.

Centropus sinensis. Crow-pheasant.

Seen round Foy reservoir.

Psittacula fasciatus. Red-breasted Parakeet.

Fairly common. It was the only Parakeet I saw. Its distinctive call is sufficient to identify it even when too far away to observe coloration.

Coracias b. affinis. The Burmese Roller.

Not very common and only seen during months June—November. The only birds I was able to identify were all of this species.

Merops orientalis. Green Bee-eater.

A common bird in and around compounds during the months October—June. Nesting sites not found.

M. superciliosus. Blue-tailed Bee-eater.

Nested in large numbers in sides of sandy hillocks round my compound in April. Disappeared after July till some time early in the year.

M. leschenaulti. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater.

Uncommon and only seen during April and May.

Ceryle rudis. Pied Kingfisher.

Fairly common and always seen on Foy reservoir.

Alcedo atthis. Common Kingfisher.

Fairly common.

Halcyon smyrnensis. White-breasted Kingfisher.

A common garden and compound bird.

Ramphalcyon capensis. Stork-billed Kingfisher.

Commonly found where trees overhang water.

Upupa epops. Hoopoe.

An occasional visitor to compounds and lawns. Seen in January, March, April, November and December.

Cypsiurus parvus. Palm Swift.

A common nesting bird during the months April—July.

Bubo coromandus. Dusky Eagle-Owl.

Apparently resident and inhabiting shady ravines behind bungalow. At night would often perch in a Blue Gum tree in garden.

Athene brama. Spotted Owlet.

Common resident.